

SPLIT TALKS 2018 lectures

### **Hermann Czech: Buildings Are Time Machines**

Transformation is an important topic in architectural theory; maybe the very key topic—because basically everything is transformation. This raises the question of how to approach the existing. Is there something new, something different set against the existing, or is it a continuation of the existing by other (or even the same) means? It seems that transformation must contain both, and that the continuation of the existing lies in the development of a new entity on a higher level.

In any transformation, there are requirements that suggest to operate against the existing built substance, to counteract it. Notwithstanding, or particularly then, the built substance or its essential thoughts can still be perceived. On the other hand, it may be an option to imperceptibly embed interventions in the existing built substance, to disguise differences and chronologies. Even in this veiling the inventory can clearly stand out.

Incidentally, every design activity is transformation. You always have to deal with a relational field of conditions. Moreover, very few architects know that their own activity, with the progress of each design, increasingly takes on the character of a remodeling. For every single decision, once made, determines later decisions, as it means an effort to reverse them. This understanding of the design process becomes especially clear in a transformation, because there is a series of decisions already implemented.

**José María De Lapuerta: "It's a wonderful life', and architecture will make it even better"**

How would the homes that George (James Stewart) was building in "It's a wonderful life" have been and that how would they change their lives?

Seven housing projects that changed things around them, finding the clue that shows us how to do it, right there. And four books about housing in Spain; from the past to the future.

In the Mina de Morro, in the European IV awarded Project, we thought that a residential Project built on an iron mine and in the middle of the mountain, can work as an infraestructura, putting order to chaos, creating squares that hover above different properties.

In Seville the traditional public spaces where even more questioned. The communal park is semipublic, the squares as well, but not as much. There must be a negotiation to use them. Everyone is organized in Facebook, and you only go to the collective space under the stars, only if you're in love.

En Bilbao la vieja, the former Camino de Santiago led to the district of drugs and prostitution. architecture ended that, proposing a Street of attics that seem ilegal and ground floors that Will never be. And hiding the apostle.

And in Morales del vino, in Zaragoza, we reinvent mountains into prairies, finding the houses and materials that where hidden. And how to change the law so that houses of disabled people don't have to pay IVA from that point and on.

In Madrid we dreamed about residential utopies creating towers of single family houses and embedding tres into their glass facades, surprised because the building didn't consume energy.

In the wealthy colony of Puerta de Hierro, reborns a old of the last century: the Ville. The bricks, the inclined cover, rejuvenate, for qualifing privacities in that mountain.

We finish, with the one with which we just started yesterday, in the most bourgeois neighborhood of the capital. we have to change the rules and put the interior patios on the facades and re-embed trees. Also invent the traditional balcony again and if you do not have a client, you invent it too.

## **Iva Letilović (Letilović + Pedišić): Formless Architecture**

To intervene within and on a cultural monument, whether it is a part of a protected entity or a singular cultural good is actually to create architecture deprived of form. The form already exists, and the task of the architect is to embed in it a program that is most often alien to it and which was never planned for it, to plant new life into an already existing environment. Consequently, the design methods change and construction is just one of the possibilities. Designing involves addition, but also subtraction; it involves a program, processes, communication, regulations, legislation and installations. A project emerges on the verge, precisely somewhere between the conservational rule of temporal sequence of historical styles and tendencies, which should remain legible on each monument, and the new content accompanied by the demands of the contemporary present.

Three realizations and a project are an example of the different state and character of the monument upon which the intervention is made, as well as the different program requirements, which influences the direction, degree and sensibility of the architectural intervention.

The Rector's Palace has preserved its material and spatial integrity, classicistic purity and tranquility, unlike the neighboring Prefect's Palace where architectural intervention, as a force of circumstances, dominates the notably weak historical constructs, breaks out of the existing form and forms its extension.

The Cedulín Palace is a historical debris in the literal sense of the word as it demands an intense intervention, the embedding of a new form within an old house, and consequently its inside appearance is not identical to the appearance of the outside.

The Small Arenal has retained its minimalist volume with conservational rehabilitation while architectural intervention rests on multimedia. The existing space, cleared of its historical deposits, provides a framework for creating an illusion which alternates with its crude appearance in a rhythm provoked by the visitors.

The museum in Biograd na Moru was originally a court building dating back to the second half of the 19th century, without any historical or even stylistic features, and the project clears the entire interior of the house and inserts a steel construction, a ship's belly, which once again holds the treasure of a sunken Renaissance ship sailing on the Venice-Istanbul route.

### Christoph Luchsinger: A(nother) sentimental journey...

My life and my experiences have always been characterized by travelling and transitions. I ignore if my curiosity which I certainly inherited from my mother and my recklessness which I certainly inherited from my father are responsible for a kind of always being alert of what has been behind and what can be in front, what already has been thought or even has been already done. This suspense is in my eyes the key factor for a methodological approach that always looks back in order to integrate the own activity that will take place in future.

Raymond Roussels "Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres" is one of the most important "theoretical lyrics" ever, as well as Jean-Luc Godards "Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma", because these depictions point out a specific relationship to what happened earlier, what happens now and what will happen in future. One could also add the story-telling of Hitchcock or Italo Calvino or Guy Debord...

Against this background a narrative of emotions, experiences, failours and efforts, loves and shifts of affections and so on will be outlined by delineating some calvary chapels that led to what we have produced in our offices as architects and urban designers. It talks about north and south, east and west in Europe and the rushed or sometimes cozy ("gemütlich" in german) eating up of territories, areas, cities, villages, landscapes and so on. A sentimental journey starting on from Switzerland.

## **András Pálffy: Retroperspective**

From the very start examples of architecture have, over the course of history, repeatedly been altered, expanded, transformed and augmented to create new spatial states. In accordance with the particular requirements of each era this fact is reflected in buildings, whether in the form of alterations to the layout of spaces or a new tectonic of the building's surfaces.

The reasons for retaining a historic system of spaces or for modifying it, at least in certain areas, can have very different origins.

In terms of the approach taken this kind of architectural examination can be highly pragmatic and may be based on economic, scheduling or constructional possibilities and, on this same basis, may exclude the option of a new building.

These pragmatic motives may be combined with the requirements of building conservation, which regulate the ways in which the existing spaces may be dealt with and, consequently, may be highly restrictive.

In making an overall evaluation of the structure of a building conservationists often like to refer to the building as a "document". To be able to rewrite or continue the spatial sequences a precise and reflective reading of this text is required.

The term "weiterbauen" (literally building further, continuing to build), which is frequently used today, reflects this requirement. But building further is always based on a topographical or object-related present and therefore on a reality from which we cannot escape.

The explicit reference to the surroundings thus becomes a fundamental basis for architectural design which in this way is integrated in clearly defined spatial, social and economic structures and which first experiences its actual meaning within these givens, along with all their contradictions and resistances.

Therefore the main focus is no longer on the aura of an object-like presence but far more on the actual potential of an intervention in its surroundings.

The polarisation of contradictory existences indicates the need to negotiate between the demands of a historic and an aesthetic truth.

In this task one fact emerges with particular clarity, a radical freedom that allows not only the ordering of the new but also continuing to build the old. Being able to find such a clear common denominator for meanings while, at the same time, developing their spatial qualities is an aspect that provides a

starting point in aiming at and working out typologically clear, yet highly specific, solutions within a context.

On this basis the brief, spatial quality and structural logic condense to form a language that can be used consistently for very different kinds of tasks.

The result of these efforts is an independence and specificity which can be repeated only with considerable restrictions. In this way the copy quickly becomes a quotation from which it is extremely difficult to extract and decipher the original meaning.

**Ana Šverko: Polyvalence and Authenticity: Unifying the Concepts of "House" and "Monument"**

This lecture presents an overview of contemporary ethical principles for working with historical architecture, which demonstrate that the only high-quality intervention is one in which architecture and conservation are understood as part of a single process. Following on from Hertzberger's and Koolhaas' essays on the relationship between inherited forms and new functions in historical architecture, this paper problematizes the theme of building on an existing form using a primarily architectural programme, because, at first glance, form is usually the more lasting element in the relationship between form and function, which is the basis of architecture. Yet the point is not to activate an unambiguous programme for the inherited form, but rather in an interaction that does not threaten its polyvalence nor its authenticity. This is because an architectural form should never be understood as passive and complete.

The second part of this lecture focuses on a brief history of the separation of the concepts of "house" and "monument", which has led to an understanding of architecture and conservation as two separate disciplines. The natural surroundings form a complex ecosystem in which human beings are the participants who bear the most responsibility. Existing urban forms, meanwhile, also include numerous monuments. The best approach is for every new creation to enter into a subtle dialogue with them, adapting them only as much as is necessary, and in so doing contributing to their regeneration.

In order that inherited architecture, as much as new architecture, may live on for generations of users, the necessary inconclusiveness, the possibility of mutual adaptation of function and form, of the spatial and temporal dimension, to new information should, just like the ecological fabric, be woven into its nature. This means it must become one of the guiding principles from the very start of every architectural process. Thinking about every "house" as a future "monument" could gradually unify these two concepts and help in the revitalising and creation of architectural works that aim for a life uninhibited by the passing of time, or rather, for a long and continuous coexistence with it.



### **Maruša Zorec: Unveiling the Hidden**

Shall old buildings survive? How can we help them to be part of our time and life? Revitalization processes should aim to find the right balance between the existing and new, among built and void, between light and shadow. The architectural value of the old is the starting point for our decisions, its structure is the guide for our concepts, the language of the old is the platform for new articulation.